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## Hope for Ending Hunger



Joseph Molieri for Bread for the World

*The United States has always been a world leader in the fight to end hunger and poverty. This spring, our partners share how **recent efforts embody the best of the United States** and why this leadership matters. First up is a guest post authored by Asma Lateef, the director of Bread for the World Institute, an anti-hunger advocacy organization. Read on to see what she had to say.*

Ending global hunger depends on giving people and communities access to the tools they need to feed their families and build stronger local food systems. That's why **Bread for the World's** grassroots members and staff have long advocated for U.S. leadership in investing in agriculture and food security in developing countries.

Feed the Future was created to do just that. It is the American response to the **2007-2008 global food price crisis** that devastated tens of millions of poor and vulnerable people around the world.

A sudden and sustained doubling or tripling of the price of staple foods such as rice, wheat and corn hit poor people in urban areas hardest, but ironically, smallholder farmers who grow food also suffered a great deal. Not only were they paying higher prices for essential foods they could not produce themselves, but their yields were simply too low to benefit from the higher prices.

The 2007-2008 crisis got the attention of policymakers all over the world because it suddenly increased hunger in many different countries. Spikes in food prices meant that families had to cut back on nutritious foods that were more expensive. They often had to sell any assets they had so that they could buy food. Once those assets were depleted, families were forced to take even more drastic measures to survive, such as skipping meals regularly, taking children out of school, and not seeking health care when ill. The consequences were far-reaching and damaging.

What the world needed was not just short-term solutions but long-term ones to this problem of chronic hunger and vulnerability. Long-term progress necessitated a focus on increasing rural incomes through improved farming practices and

access to markets as well as [prioritizing better nutrition](#) (pdf) for women and young children in the “1,000 Days” window between pregnancy and age 2. Good nutrition during this window is key for brain development and long-term health outcomes. Children who are malnourished for even short periods of time during that window will suffer irreversible damage to their health and ability to learn. These, in turn, affect their ability to earn a living and be productive as an adult.

Along these lines, the United States launched Feed the Future as a new effort to refocus attention and resources on agriculture – and it is paying off.

As Bread for the World said in [our 2011 Hunger Report](#) (*Our Common Interest: Ending Hunger and Malnutrition*): “With Feed the Future, the United States is not only in step with the rest of the international community on fighting hunger and malnutrition, but leading.” Other countries have followed the U.S. lead and increased their funding for agriculture and nutrition. These investments have a direct and lasting impact since the majority of hungry people live in rural areas.

Bread for the World has helped educate Americans and legislators about the importance of efforts like these to end global hunger. *Our Common Interest* focused attention on Feed the Future and the hope that it provides to millions of poor and hungry people, especially women and girls.

We’ve seen this hope firsthand.

Bread staff members have traveled to [Bangladesh](#) and [Nepal](#) to see the impact of Feed the Future. In southern Bangladesh, women with little formal education were coming together in “garden talks.” After a brief refresher on what good nutrition requires, the discussion moved to local foods that were rich in the various essential nutrients. In western Nepal, Bread staff went to a cooking demonstration. Along with a group of mothers with toddlers, they learned how to make a snack of potato patties more nutritious. The mothers were shown how they could do this without spending a lot of extra money, by cooking the patties in an egg batter and adding local vegetables they could grow themselves.

Food prices have stabilized in recent years and Feed the Future programs are enabling farmers and families, like these women, to learn how to make the best use of the resources available to them. Over the last five years, Congress has increased funding for agriculture and nutrition and is now considering a [bill](#) that would make Feed the Future permanent.

Bread for the World is working toward the day that all families are able to grow or buy enough nutritious food for an active, healthy life. Feed the Future – the program itself and its leadership by example – is bringing that day closer.

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#### **More from This Series:**

- [Here’s What Happens When Global Hunger Meets American Ingenuity](#)
- [Ten Things I Like About Feed the Future](#)
- [How a Global Trip Inspired This Californian to Focus Locally](#)
- [U.S. Company Helps Smallholder Farmers Fight Hunger Abroad](#)